

Happy New Year!

I am thankful for a peaceful and restful time in Lake Macquarie with my parents over Christmas and New Year.

Now that I am back in Sydney, I have been seeking God as to what he wants me to be involved in during this 6-months while I'm still in Sydney. Which includes part-time or casual work, as I am no longer currently working, and involvement at church(es).

### **New beginnings for The Well Church**



Last month, my church, The Well Church, moved to a new location for church to Olympic Park, one suburb over from where we had been meeting previously. This new location provides a larger meeting space and better facilities for us as our new Pastor Rev Elliot Ku, officially started from Jan 2025. Some of the members of his previous church have been moving over to join us also, as well as others who are curious to see what our church is like. We have gone from previously having an average of about 20 adults each week (and many kids) to now 60 or so adults a week (and 25 kids!). Praise God that he seems to be doing something in our midst in this new season.

This increase in people joining and visiting is a great blessing, but also more than expected and so there are logistical and other challenges as we adjust. Please pray for the church during this transition season, for unity as we all get to know each other. As they are my 'Sending Church', I am very thankful for their support for my upcoming missions in Japan.

The 'Installation and Relaunch' service for Rev Ku will be held on Sun Feb 2 at 10:30, followed by lunch, at ACPE in Olympic Park. Please see

'thewellchurch.au' Instagram or

<http://thewellchurch.com.au> to RSVP and for more information.



### **New Year in Japan**

New Year is a major holiday time in Japan. It is a time to go back and spend time with family, to send New Years Cards and put up special decorations dedicated to the Shinto God 'Toshigami', who is believed to visit houses on New Years Day to bring fertility and blessing.

New Year's Eve is spent doing a deep clean of the house To start the New Year cleanly, sweeping away the bad fortune and ready to make a welcome place for 'Toshigami' to visit. People eat hot buckwheat noodles (soba) in a soup, which are easy to cut, symbolising breaking ties with the current year. Then they go to Shinto shrine or Buddhist temple after midnight (see above picture) – to give the first prayers (Hatsumode) and also to buy good luck charms (Omamori), cremating the ones from last year and also picking up their fortune for the year. If the fortune is bad, it is tied to a tree at the shrine, so that hopefully it won't come true.

Special foods for blessing and longevity are eaten with the family (Osechi) and money is given to children in envelopes (Otoshidama) with the zodiac symbol for this year, which is the Snake this year.

Churches often try to have their own New Years Eve worship services to pray for and bring in the New Year. They try to make or join in some of the traditional cultural rituals which are part of Japanese culture, but in a new way, with dedication to the One God of the Bible and the creator of the universe and putting trust in him for his plans and purposes for their future and in the coming year.

## **Financial Update**

*I praise God for each of you who has felt that God has been stirring your heart to partner financially towards enabling me to do ministry in Japan next year. As I am going as a long-term missionary with a missions organisation, all my living and ministry support needs to be provided by God through financial partners who feel called to regularly support me financially, so that I am able to go and live and do ministry in Japan, to help the 99% who don't know Jesus, hear about and hopefully come to know him. And as well, through the prayers of prayer partners, as it is only God who works in the lives and hearts of Japanese people I may have the opportunity to meet and talk to, as well as giving me personally the strength, wisdom and grace to serve him there everyday.*

***I have currently reached around 50% of the financial support goal (of pledges for 1 year living/ministry expenses in Tokyo) needed before I can leave for Japan.***

***Would you please pray with me for God to keep providing financial partners, joining with pledges of regular financial support, so that I can leave by July 2025, for my first 4-year term, with full support to sustain me (at least for the first year)?***

*Pledges of regular financial support are counted towards the year's financial goal and one-off donations are spread out across the terms and used for other incidental costs and moving costs etc.*

***If you would like to partner with me financially, please***

***visit: <https://omf.org/au/giving/>***

***Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions at all!***

Thank you so much for your prayers and support. Please let me know how I can be praying for you too!!

Love and God bless,

Wendy Cumberworth

OMF Appointee Missionary

## **Prayer Points:**

- *Pray for continued provision of financial partners to join and support this ministry so that the goal of 100% financial support target can be met in God's timing to leave for Japan next year.*
- *Pray for church with the new growth and location. For strength and wisdom for the leadership as well as help for the attendees to adjust to a larger group and welcoming each other.*
- *Pray for the Induction Ceremony for Rev Elliot Ku and relaunch of our church. For the logistics of the day and that it will be a blessed time signifying new beginnings for the church.*
- *Pray for continued ongoing personal provision and support, as I will be in Sydney longer than expected. For ongoing guidance in terms of accommodation, part-time work/financial provision, church(es) involvement etc during that time.*
- *Pray for Japanese people to know the ONE loving God of the Bible and the universe, who can give them a purpose and secure future with Jesus, who is alive and hears and answers our prayers.*

***God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply.  
- Hudson Taylor (OMF founder)***

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